

1. Discuss in your own words the current issues involving the relative merits of phonics and a meaning-based approach to literacy instruction. How would you explain both approaches to the parents of a primary-age youngster? How might you convince them that an ideal program can contain elements from both perspectives?

2. Describe what you remember about your own early reading experiences. Would you characterize the instruction you recall as meaning-based, phonics, or a combination of the two?

3. React to the often-heard statement, “In education, the pendulum constantly swings back and forth from a meaning-based approach to a phonics approach to literacy instruction.” What do you think is the impetus for such change? Would you characterize the cyclical changes as static “swings” or as progressive “spirals” toward better literacy instruction?